

Meditations on the Person of the Lord Jesus The marvellous Man

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
The New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Okay, it had needed doing for some time. The shed, that glorious dumping ground and man cave was finally going to be sorted back into some order. Desperate times and all that! As I started the grand tidy up it soon became a trip down memory lane, and quite a spiritually profitable one actually. For example, there was my first ever Casey, now looking more like a curling stone than a football. In my hands it was worth about £9.99. However, in the hands of Harry Kane it was worth about £10 million. Then there was my first ever cricket bat. I still remember the forward defensive shot that spared me a couple of broken ribs as I faced a fiendish fast bowler. In my hands the bat was worth about £30. In the hands of Ben Stokes maybe nearer £2.5 million. There was the obligatory bits of wood and nails – hung onto just in case. In my hands they were worth just a pound or two. In the hands of Jesus they were worth full redemption and eternal salvation. Then, of course, there are all my worries and problems. In my hands they can become overwhelming, particularly in uncertain days. In His hands they are the opportunities to prove His worth and openings to a deeper relationship with Him. You see the worth of a thing depends on whose hands it is in.

As we continue our series of meditations on the person of the Lord Jesus, today we are going to look at the marvellous Man who lived here on earth nearly two thousand years ago. Last week we saw the suffering Servant, and some of what the Old Testament had to say about Jesus. Next week, we shall see the glorious future that God has planned for His well beloved Son, the Man whom He delights to honour. But for today we shall look at Him, the perfect Man and perhaps get a sense that our lives are entirely safe in His hands. He has been here. He has faced the problems and circumstances that we face. He knows. He sees. He cares!

Perhaps, like me, you have thought how scary it would be to be in hospital, on a ventilator, with your life in the hands of complete strangers. For sure, they might be doing a brilliant job, highly trained and caring, but scary none the less. Maybe you have listened to some world leaders speaking and worried that the future of the planet is in their hands. For many economic uncertainty, pandemic health worries and the state of the planet have left them feeling how little real control we have on our lives. We like to think that our futures are safe in our own hands but events show us that that can be merely an illusion. Critics claim that Christianity is merely a crutch to help us through life, a flight of fantasy but not much good in the real world. However as we look at the life of the Lord Jesus we will hopefully see that it is entirely safe to entrust our lives into His hands.

Perhaps you are familiar with the poem,

“The Old Violin”:

“’Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin, but held it up with a smile.

“What am I bidden, good folks?” he cried, “Who’ll start the bidding for me?”

“A pound, a pound. Then two! Only two? Two pounds, and who’ll make it three?”
“Three pounds, once; three pounds, twice; Going for three...” But no,
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loosened strings,
He played a pure and sweet, as a carolling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: “What am I bid for the old violin?” And he held it up with the bow.
“A thousand pounds, and who’ll make it two? Two thousand! And who’ll make it
three? Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice, and going and gone,” said
he. The people cheered, but some of them cried, “We do not quite understand.
What changed its worth?” Swift came the reply: “The touch of a master’s hand.”

And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin.
A “mess of pottage,” a glass of wine, a game — and he travels on.
He is “going” once, and “going” twice, he’s “going” and almost “gone.”
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought by the touch of the Master’s
hand.”

Myra 'Brooks' Welch

May we in increasing measure in our lives be like that old and battered violin
finding our worth as we are touched by the Master’s hand!

I would like today to look at five areas of the Lord’s life and see how, in each, He was perfect. That alone should do us good. It is always a good thing to meditate on Him and to fill our minds with His loveliness. Oh, that we, like the bride, might be able to say, when questioned:

“What is your beloved more than another beloved?” “He is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend” Song of Solomon 5: 9,16.

But hopefully we will also learn from Him, and see that we can face the same kinds of circumstances that He faced, and that we now face, in just the same way.

How Jesus met and helped individuals

I have been so impressed recently by how Jesus dealt with those who were socially isolated. John Donne said that: “No man is an island”. We have all felt the truth of this in recent times. But what we have experienced for a period of weeks or months was the experience of two characters in the Gospels for years – maybe a whole lifetime.

“Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed”” Mark 1: 40,41.

Three things are worth noting here. Firstly, that the Lord of glory made time for an individual that few others would have made time for. A rich young ruler certainly. A grieving widow, maybe. But a leper, an outcast from society, one who was clearly under the judgement of God for some supposed terrible crime. In our results driven society, we may have lost the sense that what really matters is the individual and not the outcome. Secondly, Jesus was moved with compassion. I think I might have been moved with frustration – just another interruption in what was already a busy day. Not so Jesus. His driving emotion was compassion. He really felt the needs of the leper and understood them. That is what compassion is! We will often face circumstances that we do not

understand, but we can be sure that He does and He feels our insecurities. Thirdly, He touched the leper. Of course, a word would have healed the man's leprosy. But for a man who had maybe not felt the touch of another human being for many years, he also needed inner healing and so Jesus touched him, flesh on diseased flesh. Jesus could not have come closer. If we want to help others, we are going to have to get close and put our lives on the line.

There is another 'touching' incident that we read about in Mark 5: 28 -30:

"For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?""

The only point I would make here is that what really matters is not our closeness to Him but His power to bless. I know that at times I go through periods when it feels like my prayers barely get to the ceiling and back, let alone all the way into the throne room of Heaven. However, that does not really matter. His power to act is not restricted by my feelings of closeness or otherwise. Similarly, our ability to be a blessing to others does not depend upon our ability but more upon our availability. It is His power that made the difference to the woman. It is His power that makes all the difference in our lives!

How Jesus met and overcame temptation

How often have you felt overwhelmed in a particular situation and the temptation comes to give up, or to lash out or give in? How can Jesus help in those situations? He doesn't understand what it is like for me! Except He does. In Luke 4:1 – 13 we read about how Jesus met and overcame temptation three times. In 1 John 2:16 we read:

"For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world".

This neatly summarises every kind of temptation we may face, and Jesus faced them also. Turning stones to bread – the lust of the flesh; the kingdoms of the world – the lust of the eyes; the test on the pinnacle of the Temple – the pride of life. Circumstances and specifics do change, but the fundamentals are the same. Now you might be thinking that it does not compare. Jesus was God and so He could not sin. You would, of course, be right. Jesus was God and so He could not sin. But because He was God, He had an infinite ability to feel the suffering of doing what was wrong. As humans we only have a limited ability to feel the frustration of temptation. As sinners the pain is dulled – we sometimes even enjoy temptation. Neither of these 'releases' was open to the Lord as He met temptation head on. Every time He did so by quoting the Bible. What God has said is our sure resource in times of trouble and temptation. All He says is for our good, as He knows us better than we know ourselves. If we are to lead victorious Christian lives, then we really must emulate Him in learning to face temptation in the power of His word only. It is not by gritting our teeth and facing it alone. Am I ready for this kind of battle? Do I even know His word enough to be able to fall back upon it instinctively? If you find Bible study difficult, then why not request a Bible study guide, for example, "The Believer's Battle with Temptation", that we offer with these programmes.

How Jesus met and handled death

If you had to pick two words in the Bible that really stand out, you might be drawn towards John 11:35 which powerfully says: "Jesus wept". I want to remind us of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13:

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”

In the beautiful way Jesus dealt with the sisters in Bethany, we see the pattern for our handling of death. He wept! Sometimes we give the impression that as Christians we must be happy all the time. Jesus was not. He wept in sympathy with those two sisters, sharing their grief and loss. More importantly, He wept at the havoc and devastation that sin has caused in this world. Death had no right to be in God’s perfect creation but instead had been the result of sin. But He did not weep as those who have no hope. He knew that Lazarus would live again, and for the believer, death is not the end but the transition to a far better way of living. The loss of absence is still there but not the loss of futility and finality.

But we ought not to lose a sense of the wrongness of death itself. Sometimes we may want to celebrate the life of a loved one so much that we focus only on their life. That is good to a point. But the one who has died did so as a result of their sinful humanity, and this should rightly grieve us. That sinful humanity is still alive and well in my life. That sinful humanity caused the Lord Jesus to die on the cross and that should be a cause of grief to me.

We also see that in the face of death, Jesus chose His words carefully. As He died on the cross, He spoke to the repentant thief:

“I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” Luke 23: 43.

He could have given the thief a stern talking to about the wasted life that was now coming to an end, but He did not. He could have spoken to him about the importance of baptism and justification, but He did not. Instead He spoke about what the thief had strived all his life for – paradise and reassured him of that. At all times in life, it is important to think carefully about what we say, but particularly at the graveside it is wise to say less rather than say hurtful words or pious, empty words. Even in death, Jesus did not let the agony of His own circumstances get the better of His tongue. Each word He spoke was exactly right.

How Jesus met and confronted sin

We live in a beautiful but fallen world. I am doubtful that we can go even one day without being confronted by the consequences of sin. It may be from within or as others impact upon our lives. How we deal with this is so important and, as in all things, Jesus gives us the perfect example. In John chapter 8, we read about a woman caught in the act of adultery who was dragged before Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees wanted to trip Jesus up into either condoning sin and excusing the woman, or into taking a legalistic attitude and condemning her. Jesus would do neither. Time and again, He stoops down and looks at the ground. I don’t suppose the woman’s accusers had given her the time to put on a hat and best Sunday dress! His eyes at least, like Joseph years before, ran from temptation. We do well when we avoid tempting circumstances as much as we are able. But sometimes we just cannot!

Faced with the choice between legalism and license, Jesus chose a third way. He challenged the scribes and Pharisees about their right to act as a judge:

“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first”.

In so few words, He has absolutely confirmed the rightness of the law – adultery is wrong, no ifs, no buts. He has also confirmed the principle that the only right punishment for sin is that laid down in the Bible. But He has also completely removed the right of those men to act as judges. They were witnesses, but God alone is Judge of all the world. Too often, I think that we lose sight of this. We speak harshly of others and condemn their wrong behaviour. Of course, we would never do that kind of thing. We loudly lament the terrible society we live in, forgetting that we are a part of

that same society. We might even give out the message that the church is really only open for the perfect – sinners need not apply!

By challenging the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was saying that they were all guilty under the same law. Except that they were not **all** guilty! Jesus, in His wonderful perfection, had the right to act as Judge. So He said to the woman, in verse 11:

“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”.

These words are, at the same time, both remarkably liberating and tremendously challenging. The one person there that day who had the right to condemn, chose not to. He would bear that condemnation on the cross as He gave His life for each one of us. However, that did not allow the woman to go and live as she chose. She was to sin no more. Jesus wanted the very best for that woman, and His understanding of how this is to be achieved lay in sinning no more. That is true for us too!

We may like to point the finger at those whom we consider guilty of gross misbehaviour, as if this makes us any better. We condemn one kind of behaviour and another. Jesus would rather have us engaged in supporting those around us to “sin no more”. We can be better than we are at the moment. We can make a better society – not by prohibition, but by example and encouragement. As Christians, we rightly believe that we know the way not only to the certainty of heaven but also to the better life, here upon earth. Jesus knew it – obedience to His Father. We know it – being like Christ. So let us stop being those who complain and condemn and be those who actively encourage those around us to be the people that God intended them to be.

How Jesus controlled His emotions

It is worth reminding ourselves of the time when Jesus cleansed the temple. We read about it in John 2: 13 – 17:

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up””.

We do not have time now to consider these verses in detail. I just want to make the two points that Jesus expressed the full range of emotions that are common to humanity. Here, He was angry and properly so. To be godly does not mean shutting down our emotions and becoming a monochrome automaton. However, His emotions were under control. He did not whip the doves, but spoke to their sellers and told them to take them away, so all was done in an orderly manner. Anger, and other strong emotions, can be a right response but only as they are held under control and when prompted by godly desires. The sanctity of God and His things are something that should really matter to us. We should not be wishy-washy when we consider the state of the public testimony of the Lord Jesus and His church. However, all that we do must be done in a right way with our emotions fully under His control. It is too easy to let our words run ahead of ourselves in the heat of a moment, or to let personal differences spill out into open conflict.

At the end of His life, Jesus could say:

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name” John 12: 27 – 28.

Even as the extremity of Calvary approached, Jesus was able to take all His worries and frustrations, all His fears and desires and hand them over to God – glorify Your name. That is the example for us to follow. Rather than denying our emotions, let us gladly hand them over to God and ask Him to glorify His name in us.

What a marvellous man Jesus was! Perfect in every sphere of His life. His hands really are a safe place for us to entrust our lives to. Our true worth, our real value can only be realised as we hand over to Him our battered lives that we so treasure, and let Him do with them as He knows best. We need not fear that in giving ourselves to Him we will miss out on anything of value. Rather, in giving to Him, the things of little value will suddenly become of immense worth and eternal benefit. It really is the touch of the Master's hand that we need in our lives, both today and for evermore!

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